

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Wednesday, March 7, 2012**

In attendance: Maria Martorana, Tammy MacKay, Jeanne Stifelman, Harry Ruiz, David Rosenblatt, Jennifer Fano, Debbie Iosso, Martel Roberts, Deb Holz, Maryalice Thomas, Lisa Horvot, and members of the public.

Approval of Minutes

Education Committee: 2-8-12

Updates

Option II Program at Randolph High School –Mrs. Debbie Iosso, Mrs. Martel Roberts, and Mrs. Deb Holz

Option II is a New Jersey Department of Education program that serves as an alternative to traditional high school courses. It involves in-depth experiences that may include college level courses, independent study, peer teaching, job exploration, and service learning or community service. This year there are approximately 100 students involved in the Option II program, potentially it can service any number of students.

In an effort to make the course more interesting to students, a committee was established to develop clear expectations. Once enrolled, the process for a student begins with an application and interview. There are biweekly reports from the employer, agency, teacher, or student and assessments are based upon student journals, employer evaluations, and a final presentation / project. This year Mrs. Holz represented the Guidance Department on the committee and helped to create rubrics and tracking sheets. She also worked directly with Mrs. Roberts who interviewed every student enrolled in Option II this year. The increased collaboration with the Guidance department has enhanced the understanding of the opportunities available through Option II.

Mrs. Roberts spoke about providing creative opportunities to make our students more marketable. She also stated that Option II is for every student who wants this possibility at Randolph High School. She chose to highlight three unique courses from this current school year; we have one student working at an organic farm, one working with a woodworker, and a third student training to be an EMT.

Aside from program ideas outside of Randolph High School, peer teaching and independent study are two options available to seniors as an Option II course that may take place within the school day. For both peer teaching and independent study, there is a contract to outline clear expectations between the student and the mentor teacher.

Mrs. Iosso recommended a full or part-time Option II Coordinator for 2012-2013. A coordinator would help to guide students toward opportunities they may not yet be aware are possible. A coordinator would also make it easier to visit students at the site they are working to ensure that their experience is enriching and successful.

Peer Group Connection course at Randolph High School – Mrs. Debbie Iosso, Dr. Maryalice Thomas, and Lisa Horvot

Peer Group Connections (PGC) is a program for high school seniors that was developed by Princeton Center for Leadership. Dr. Thomas first proposed implementing the PCG curriculum in 1999, the time the tragedy at Columbine occurred. PGC is a scheduled course for a senior to become a mentor, also known as a PGC leader, who works directly with students from the freshman class. Currently PGC is scheduled for about 18 seniors working with about a third of the freshmen, that is approximately 65 students this year. While seniors elect to take this course, freshmen are randomly selected based upon their physical education class schedule and taught by the senior PGC leaders approximately once a week. At the beginning of the school year information is sent home to the parents of the participating freshmen and they have the option to opt out, but this is not common.

Dr. Thomas, Mrs. Horvot, Marilyn Tuzzo, and Joe Lusardi facilitate this full year elective course for seniors, which begins with a ten-page application and a project. This year there are 65 applications for PGC leaders. This is followed by a half-day interview to identify the seniors being accepted into this program. The current PGC leaders and the four teachers collaborate to select the next year's PGC leaders from many different groups within the high school. The PGC leaders then participate in a two-day retreat in August with the four teachers to develop positive relationships among one another, practice strategies to present topics as a mentor to the freshmen, and to identify another senior to partner with for the next school year.

The senior PGC leaders are taught a lesson each week by Ms. Tuzzo, Mr. Lusardi, and/or Mrs. Horvot. The PGC Leaders prepare for the lesson and then the PGC leader partners work together to facilitate a lesson with a class of about 8-10 freshmen. Lesson topics have included role-playing and discussions about traditions, bullying, healthy relationships, and problem solving, to name a few.

Staffing was the focus of the teachers' request to support the expansion of this program to at least one more group of senior mentors. Currently one teacher is relieved of a duty, another is paid for a sixth period, and two do not have structured teaching assignments. Mrs. Iosso will work to identify ways to expand this program before making a request for additional staff.

Motions and Related Matters

Study Island in the Math and Language Arts Departments

By: Luanne Budd, Math Supervisor and Michael Portas, Language Arts Supervisor

Study Island has been purchased for the elementary schools, for the middle school and for the high school. In the middle school, its use has boosted the math scores on NJ ASK grades 6,7, and 8 tremendously since its inception about 6 years ago. All of the math teachers at RMS give long-range assignments that are to be completed at home. Teachers can access the site to find out how their students did on the section. If students need their scores reset in order to make the attainment of the coveted blue ribbon possible, they ask the teacher to do so.

Currently, each teacher counts Study Island progress differently toward the marking period grade. In no case however, is it worth more than about 10% of the final grade for the marking

period. However, because the middle school teachers are being asked to develop consistency within a grade level and within a discipline regarding grading, for next September, it will be more consistent. Topics are chosen either to be a review of material that was taught previously, or material that is currently being studied.

The primary reason that the district uses this resource is to ensure that preparation for the NJ ASK is a continual process all throughout the year and not just concentrated in a few weeks immediately before the test administration.

In the high school, Study Island is used with current juniors in the same way. It is also used much more extensively and during class time in the Academic Review class (HSPA prep class for students in danger of failing).

In conjunction with the Math department, Study Island has been purchased for the elementary schools, middle school and for the high school for the past six years. We have used the program as an at-home learning portal that is designed to augment students' learning of the skills necessary to excel on the Language Arts components of the NJ ASK and HSPA exams. The main objective is that students will improve the tested skills over the course of the school year. The primary use of Study Island is as an at-home assessment tool. Students, parents and teachers have access to student performance data and, in most cases, the exact question-by-question results of their work.

There is not an agreed upon percentage in place for Study Island, yet. As we discuss shared assessments and grading models in the RMS PLC's and at RHS, there should be a more defined value upheld unilaterally at each school. Currently, Study Island grades are used as homework grades and are not a significant factor in overall grades.

Study Island has received mixed reviews from teachers and students. We intend to analyze how specific assessments from Study Island can be better aligned with the assessment portions of our curricula that should be mapped out more clearly as we continue to revise those documents. In conjunction with rigorous, standards-based skills development and in-class assessments, the program is a useful supplemental assessment and instructional support tool.

*The next Education Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 4, 2012
7:00 PM, Central Office Conference Room*